



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

**Testimony in Support of HB 5789  
House Judiciary Committee  
September 27, 2012**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I thank you for hearing testimony on HB 5789, legislation to address the impact of animal fighting on communities. My name is Jill Fritz and I am the Michigan state director for The Humane Society of the United States. On behalf of our 415,000 members and constituents in Michigan, I come in strong support of this legislation to allow a building, vehicle, boat, aircraft, or place where animal fighting is conducted to be declared a nuisance.

Aside from the obvious cruelty of organized dogfighting, there are considerable public safety concerns. Dogfighting does not occur in a vacuum: Narcotics, illegal gambling, firearms, and even homicide go hand in hand with animal fighting operations. Rarely do law enforcement officers find a dogfighting operation that does not also host other serious criminal activities, all of which drastically impact community safety. There is ample empirical evidence supporting this. For example, a study conducted between 2001 and 2004 by the Chicago Police Department found “a startling propensity for offenders charged with crimes against animals to commit other violent offenses toward human victims.” Among other things, the study found that 70% of those arrested for animal crimes had also been arrested for other felonies, 65% had past arrests for battery, and 70% had been arrested for illegal narcotics.

Recently the Humane Society of the United States assisted Kalamazoo County Animal Services and Enforcement (KCASE) with the bust of two dogfighting operations in Kalamazoo, and the removal of 46 dogs to our emergency shelter for care and rehabilitation. A few days later, KCASE removed seven more dogs from a third suspected fighting operation in the area. At the scene of the first two operations, we witnessed all of the signs of dogfighting activity, including dogfighting rings—caked with splattered blood and fur—and the drugs, equipment, and paraphernalia used to train dogs to fight. We were also disturbed to see many toys, swing sets, and other child-related items at both homes. It’s extremely distressing that children could have been regularly exposed to—and potentially desensitized to—this type of violent, inhumane practice.

In addition, one of the suspects in the Kalamazoo dogfighting cases, Sam Steel, had six previous felony convictions and was recently charged with murder, felony firearms used to commit murder, felony firearms used in an assault with intent to commit murder, and separate firearms charges. Yet another suspect, Marvis Blanks, faces four felony animal cruelty/fighting charges, and is a registered sex offender who was convicted of possessing child pornography in July of this year.

For the reasons stated above, we find that animal fighting is truly a nuisance to our communities, and a danger to the adults and children who live in and around it. Allowing the property on which animal fighting is conducted to be declared a nuisance will help protect citizens from this hazardous blight to their neighborhoods.

The bloodlust and gambling that fuel dogfighting activity should not be tolerated in a civilized, humane society. The case for passage of HB 5789 is strong, and I urge committee members to please vote yes on this bill. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

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